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The Rev. Brother BENTLEY'S

DISCOURSE,

And Brother DIX'S

ADDRESS;

AT THE

CONSECRATION

OF

Waſhington Lodge

IN *ROXBURY.*

A

DISCOURSE,

Delivered in *ROXBURY*, October 12, 5796;

BEFORE THE

GRAND LODGE

OF

Free and Accepted Masons

IN THE

COMMONWEALTH OF *MASSACHUSETTS*;

(THE MOST WORSHIPFUL *PAUL REVERE*, ESQ; MASTER.)

AT THE REQUEST OF THE *MEMBERS* OF

WASHINGTON LODGE,

ON OCCASION OF THE *CONSECRATION* OF THE *LODGE*
AND THE *INSTALATION* OF *OFFICERS*.

BY THE REV. BROTHER WILLIAM BENTLEY, A. M. F. H. S.

———— *SPERATA VOLUPTAS*
SUAVIS AMICITIÆ, *QUEMVIS PERFERRE LABOREM*,
SUADET.—— LUCRETIUS.

BOSTON:
WILLIAM SPOTSWOOD.
1797.

A

DISCOURSE.

ECCLESIASTICUS X, 20.

AMONG BRETHREN, HE THAT IS CHIEF, IS HONOURABLE.

IT is the laudible purpoſe of our inſtitution, by the moſt agreeable means, to expand our hearts for all the offices of humanity. It does not deſtroy, nor even weaken the love of private intereſt, of kindred, nations, or

opinions. It is intended to aſſiſt a generous energy of mind, in riſing to the higheſt obligations of charity. It accompliſhes its end, by creating a ſociety, in which we familiarize its ſpecial duties, by a voluntary aſſociation with all parts of the family into which we enter. The ſtrongeſt prejudices are ſuch only as exiſt in every kindred, which has a duty and affection, not directed by pure character, but by an eſtabliſhed, immutable, and public relation. We embrace friends through the world. He that is firſt in ſuch a family among brethren, ſhould be ſocial in his diſpoſition, open in his temper, ſafe in his habits, firm in his character, and reputable in the world. To deſerve this preference, and to receive it, muſt be the higheſt honour. From the perſuaſion of this truth, my Brethren, I riſe with cheerfulneſs, in the ſervice you have aſſigned me, in bearing your public teſtimony to this ſentiment. We are Brethren. Duties belong to each; but different duties to all. The wiſdom of the head; the ſincerity of the heart; the benevolence of the temper; the quickneſs of the ſenſes; and the organic life, in each part, form the perfection of the

whole. But all theſe parts have not the ſame office, nor the ſame reſources. If the head be ſound, each faculty more readily finds its full employment and uſe. The head, then, is the moſt honourable. Equal as are all friendſhips, with ſociety, we begin a neceſſary ſubordination. And as this is more perfect and happy, we flouriſh and are bleſſed. The choice of the man then, and not of the maſter, is voluntary. The man may be changed, but the Maſter is perpetual. He is created by our neceſſity, and we owe him the full obedience of our Love. In the duties of his office he is the ſoul of our inſtitution; and while he lives in our reverence of him, we live alſo. To judge of that wiſdom, we may employ in the choice, we muſt be ſure of the *character*, *object*, *manners*, *and form* of Free Maſonry.

I. As the whole character of man is from education, under various names, ſo there are inſtitutions to aſſiſt this education. They have various objects. They aſſiſt to devellope the faculties; to inſtruct in the arts; to form manners; to promote knowledge; to preſerve

the affections ; or to teach religion. They ariſe from private choice, or from the authority of Laws. They are adapted to private, or public ends. Some are deſigned to reform mankind, others to unite them. Some to find greater reſources in human nature, and ſome to keep what we have already gotten. Some to ſeparate the wiſe and good from the reſt of mankind, and ſome to promote the general good. Our own is deſigned to bring all the ſocial affections away from the cares of life; and the partialities of private friendſhip, into the ſervice of our common nature. We prefer no man's religion. We examine no laws of any country. We ſpeak in no language: and take names from no party. We belong to every thing ſincere and ſocial in the human heart. We explore the imperfection of no character, which can be tolerated by the laws of any country. All men who have the heart to be ſocial, and the power to be kind, we love. The gay we do not deſpiſe. The follies which violate no laws of life and manners, we forget. We mix our pleaſures with every innocent gaiety of the ſong; and we become cheerful at the flowing bowl, and

the table. We take men as we find them, diſpoſed to live in the happineſs of each other. Such is the *Character* of Free Maſonry.

II. But to guard our inſtitution from abuſe, we have a generous object always before us. We chaſe away all envy, competition, and ſtrife. We have our brethren every where in the family of mankind: we therefore deſpiſe no cuſtoms, inſult no laws, and hate no country. To know our brethren is our delight; to aſſiſt them is our glory. Our wealth, beyond our own wants, is ſacred to their uſe. To point out the path of life, and make it happy, is our ſublime wiſdom. We cannot be friends of ſociety, if we violate any of its laws. To be honourable among maſons, we muſt have honour from every ſocial obligation. We have too great a ſhare in the public happineſs, to ſeparate from it. We cannot be miſerable, becauſe every man's happineſs is our own. Cheerful, we are ſure to be content; and, as far as we are able, we provide for perpetual peace. Domeſtic life has its chief joys from our friendſhip; and induſtry its greateſt guards from our love.

We know no man, but in his capacity for happineſs; and we have no duty to him, but to enlarge it. Such is the *object* of our inſtitution.

III. We are not inſenſible of the liableneſs of our inſtitution to abuſe, and we know that the abuſes of all inſtitutions have a character from the nature of them. How ineſtimable are the advantages of religion! Of living in the love of God! But how many fanatics and bigots, devotees and myſtics, are recounted in the hiſtory of every religion. We furniſh none of theſe; we ſhun them. But, while the paſſions live in our world in ſad perverſion, we dare not pretend, that our brethren have not been betrayed. We pretend to nothing above human nature. We take propenſities as we find them, and we aim to render them uſeful. We take the man in the gay hour, when his countenance is cheered by the congratulations of his friends; his ſpirits elevated by mirth, and the ſong; when fancy is ſportive, and amuſements are ready; and while he is exhilirated at the feaſt of joy. Theſe are ſcenes from which the gay will not be excluded. They

may be rendered the innocent pleaſures of ſocial life. They are not ſought with equal delight in every place. The glaſs is never filled in the maſter's preſence in ſome places, but at the feſtivals; and the ſong is ſeldom heard among ſome brethren, but in the jocund hour, when the Lodge is ſhut. Theſe pleaſures are indulgences, not Laws: of choice, not of obligation. And if we ſometimes exceed the bounds, which decency and good manners appoint, it is not becauſe we do not profeſs an abhorrence of every thing contrary to the pureſt laws of life. We lament what we cannot correct. And in a faithful maſter, we have the ſureſt reſtraints upon our gayeſt pleaſures. Our dangers are from the activity of our ſpirits, and from the unbounded effuſions of a cheerful hour. Profuſion waits upon the ſteps of jollity, and pleaſure often deſpiſes intereſt. A maſter watches over his Lodge: he commands, and he is always obeyed.

IV. The *form* of the inſtitution can be known only to the brethren. There is nothing, which the moſt refined delicacy might not behold. The ſolemn addreſſes at initi-

ation are before the world. We publiſh our Conſtitutions, Regulations, Inſtructions, and general Laws; and even our freeſt mirth; and from theſe we may appeal to an impartial world, whether thoſe are not good principles we profeſs. We juſtify the uſe of every rite, of every form and ceremony, which can aid the local prejudices of religion or virtue. And the diſcretion gives no offence. We truſt that the ſcene of this day will ſtrengthen the convictions, that there are no obligations unworthy of a good man, and that the preſence of the wiſe would be a deſireable bleſſing to Free Maſonry.

The Symbols we diſplay, have been variouſly interpreted. We publiſh them not for curioſity, but for ceremony. They are employed not for ſuperſtition, but for uſe. All conſtructions favourable to moral life are indulged, rather to remove prejudices abroad, than to define their character within the Lodge. They are free for diſquiſition, while they contribute to no diſſention. To avoid the charge of obſcurity, we ſhall not enter upon any particular explanation. It is enough, that the ſcrutiny of an antiquarian may re-

port that they are the moſt early emblems of wiſdom, and ſuch as may be found among all antient nations. A Bryant might diſcover the ſymbols of Egypt, as an Hutcheſon has of Pythagoras, as well as of the antient myſtics. They betray to the ſcholar no proofs of modern times, for their invention is as old as ſcience itſelf. They have been confounded with the emblems in the myſteries of Greece, and conſtantly traced to geometry and philoſophy. A ſtrong reſemblance in the antient gems has forced itſelf upon the notice of the moſt curſory obſerver. It is enough, if they be faithful in communicating their deſign through the world.

FROM theſe remarks upon Free Maſonry, it may be ſoon apparent, how much will depend on the *Lectures* of a Lodge, and conſequently how much upon a faithful *Maſter*, and *Wardens*. It may then be expected that every brother, who aſſumes an office, by the conſent of a Lodge, will ſacredly attend to his charge. Every officer ought to be a calm, friendly, and benevolent man. An extenſive

knowledge of the brethren ought to be his deſire, but he certainly ought to know the character and habits of all in his own Lodge. The difference between well governed Lodges, and all other Lodges, is the greateſt to be imagined. Nothing ſhould be ſuffered which can provoke, alarm, or excite prejudice. The office of Charity is to keep every ſuch thing from a Lodge. Unleſs then the maſter can riſe above the diſtinctions of ſects in religion, while he has an eſtabliſhed character in the public opinion; unleſs he is ſuperior to parties in the ſtate; unleſs he can freely converſe with all the brethren, without regard to the competitions of private life; unleſs he can be indulgent to particular manners and tempers, to cuſtoms, with which he cannot comply, and to amuſements, he cannot prefer; he will never diffuſe a generous joy around him. All hearts will not be united. All prejudices will be active. Cheerfulneſs will not lean on partial kindneſs; nor fellowſhip ſit with diſgrace. Brethren will not ſuffer their charity to be degraded by their opinions, nor by their names.

For voluntary aſſociations, we require ſuch men to hold offices, as can be punctual, active, and ready in all the ſervices of their ſtation: to whom the proſperity of the Lodge is the higheſt reward, and whoſe meaſure of duty, is not from what others have done, but from a diſpoſition to do all the good in their power. Happy indeed will it be, if the domeſtic and ſocial character of a Maſter be lovely in the world, and inſpire confidence in his benevolence. After ſuch a delineation of our character, our brethren in this vicinity will not doubt of the nature of our advice and charge in theſe ſolemnities.

Let me then ſay to our Brethren of Washington Lodge; In this ſocial inſtitution you have the indulgence of all the innocent paſſions, and all the incentives of generous affections. You may unbend in ſocial glee, catch the ſweet ſympathy of pleaſure, and ſhare it with fullneſs of ſoul. And while you rejoice in, you ought to urge a friendly zeal, and even an enthuſiaſm to defend, a friendſhip you thus honourably enjoy.

To ſecure a maſon's heart, he ought to have a ſincere temper, and the habits of good will. Our friendſhip is not begun in diſintereſted love. We have an intereſt in each other. There is too little of this love in the world, not to induce doubts of the ſtrength of it, in many who profeſs it. The little to be found, which reſembles it, agrees too well with the nature of our habits, to be accounted for, more eaſily, on any other principles. Conſtancy, then, is a virtue of a flouriſhing Lodge. It is only while we keep near the Lodge, we are Maſons.

Masons, as brethren, ought to be careful to receive only thoſe who appear *good men and true*. What we gain from prejudice, is not ſure gain. To open our arms to the diſgraced or the diſcontented of any ſociety, is to degrade ourſelves and make the injured our enemies. This will give a triumph to their zeal, and juſtify their invectives. He that is not at peace with all the world, cannot be at peace with us. He that deſpiſes and violates any profeſſion, will certainly diſhonour us.

MASONS ought not only to regard the character of men, but their *diſpoſitions*. An ininſtitution may be adapted to preſerve virtue, which is not fit to create it. The man who profits ſo little from life, as to have no lovely virtues, will be a tax upon us. He who does not conform to the approved manners and laws of a country, wants the firſt principles of friendſhip, and muſt prove a diſgrace to us.

MASONS ought alſo to confirm their intereſt in each other. As the ſocial principle becomes more ſtrong from the intereſt we have in each other, in our whole character, we muſt have the greateſt intereſt in every thing dear to the brethren. He that in common life can deſpiſe the moſt whimſical thoughts of a brother, will never enjoy his affections. A good brother muſt learn to ſee without any contempt, the moſt ſtrange opinions living in a good heart. A Lodge is not a place for debate, or controverſy. Political queſtions are unknown in it. Every thing belonging to a brother enjoys our charity.

MASONS ſhould determine the *converſation* of a Lodge. The converſation that ſeems to have no higher aim than to diffuſe general pleaſure, and ends in no ill natured reflections, but leaves friends at parting in perfect good humour, tends more to make men love one another, do their duty in ſociety, and love their Creator, than any we can adopt in ſuch aſſociations. Moſt of our duty lies in ſociety, and moſt of our virtue in contributing to make men happy in themſelves. A wiſe man will look around him, not to ſay an ill thing without danger, but to learn how to recommend the moſt uſeful thoughts he can utter. He will endeavour to pleaſe in the beſt manner with the leaſt offence.

AND for our common intereſt let me ſay, after Lodges have received their charters, and have been inſtructed, if they do not aſſert an independence, they are too apt to enjoy it. They become too negligent of their *repreſentation*, and of their *communications in the* GRAND LODGE. Excellent members, confined to their lovely lodges, forget that we are a band of brethren, and owe each other the

moſt free communications. Every brother ought to aſpire after the honours of theſe orderly viſits; and, next to our own buſineſs, ought to be an enquiry into the laſt quarterly communications. A maſon would then find that he belonged to a ſociety more extenſive than of his own neighbourhood. He would thus have the progreſs of the order, in his own country at leaſt, if not through the world, before him. In his private pleaſures he would not forget the general proſperity. We have our reſpective orbs; but we revolve around a common center. And from its glory, we have life, health and fraternity.

It ſhould alſo be remembered, that *the ſtrength of Lodges is in their members*. While Lodges are open to the viſits of Brethren, great care ſhould be ſhewn, that due honours are given to members of Lodges. Generous liberty does not permit a brother to make a free uſe of his privilege, while in no place he welcomes a regular ſummons. The Temple is not finiſhed, and no brother ceaſes entirely from labour, unleſs privileged by particular ſervices. To be members, is to hold the ob-

ligation, which is indiſpenſably neceſſary for the exiſtence of our order.

In *expences*, that method will be moſt happy, which keeps the funds, the ſpecial charities, the current charges, and the entertainments, moſt diſtinct. The laſt ought to fall upon thoſe who enjoy them. They are, therefore, better out of the Lodge than in it, for *moral*, as well as *economical* reaſons.

In the *admiſſion* of *members*, regard ought to be paid to merit, in the kindeſt exemptions from expence when the perſons of merit cannot well ſupport it. Such men would bring a character with them, and eſtabliſh it in a Lodge. It would then be free from cenſure, and adorned with all the virtues of the beſt of men.

And as we hold ſacred the confidence of domeſtic life, our pleaſures ſhould never incroach upon the hours devoted to retirement, and to our homes.

In qualifying ourſelves to fill the Offices with ſuch virtues, we riſe in the public eſ-

teem, and enjoy the benevolent end of our inſtitution. Our habits become as favourable to the beſt ſervices in our power towards our brethren, as our hearts become free for the enjoyment of our ſocial glee; and neither our intereſt in the world, nor our good habits ſuffer from our lovely aſſociation.

LET us then cultivate the true temper of Free Maſonry, and let us adorn the character with its commendable virtues. Then in happy time we may adorn a maſter's ſtation, and we ſhall always poſſeſs the merit, which would juſtify the appointment.

BELIEVE me, when I ſay, that as I love the principles of the Order, and have ſeen their benefit, ſo I ſincerely deſire to ſee the order reſpectable.